

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PDIP PGOV ELAB ECON ETRD EINV EFIS EWWT EAID MP UR FR CH
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - JULY 15

REF: PORT LOUIS 727

SUMMARY: PORT LOUIS 750 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS CABLE.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE GOM HAS DECIDED TO INSTITUTE SEVERAL NEW SECURITY MEASURES
IN THE WAKE OF THE SYCHELLES COUPJM ONE MEASURE WILL BE TO RESTRICT
ACCESS TO MINISTERIAL OFFICES IN GOVERNMENT HOUSE WHICH WERE
HERETOFORE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, ACCORDING TO INDEPENDENT L'EXPRESS.
ALSO, A NEW INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICE IS TO BE CREATED,
HEADED BY RETIRING POLICE COMMISSIONER FULENA AND ASSISTED BY
THE P.M.'S BRITISH SECURITY ADVISER, REWCASTLE. THE PAPER SAYS
FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS MAY BE RESTRICTED IN SIZE BECAUSE OF
CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE SPYING ACTIVITIES.

2. THE MMM- AFFILIATED GENERAL WORKERS FEDERATION (GWF), THE
EMPLOYERS FEDERATION AND THE LABOR MINISTER CAME TO AN AGREEMENT
ON SOME STEPS TO DEAL WITH THE PORBLEMS OF LAY-OFFS IN A
NUMBER OF INDUSTRIES. COMPANIES IN TROUBLE ARE TO NOTIFY
THE GOVERNMENT WELL IN ADVANCE OF LAY-OFFS AND STEPS ARE TO
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BE TAKEN TO HELP THEM, TO TRY TO PRESERVE THE WORKERS' JOBS
AND TO FIND THEM WORK ELSEWHERE IF THEY MUST BE DISMISSED.
ALL AGREED THAT JOBS SHOULD BE PRESERVED IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE.
AN AMEMDMENT TO THE LABOR ACT MAY BE PROPOSED IN THIS SENSE.

3. ACTING PRIME MINISTER RINGADOO PRESIDED OVER A TRADE
UNION-EMPLOYERS-GOVERNMENT JOINT MEETING THIS WEEK TO DISCUSS

THE UNIONS' DEMAND FOR A 22 PER CENT GENERAL WAGE INCREASE. THE MEETING DECIDED TO APPOINT THREE SUB-COMMITTEES, WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL THREE GROUPS SITTING ON EACH, TO STUDY: (A) THE COST OF LIVING; (B) FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC; AND (C) FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR, OF THE WAGE DEMAND.

4. MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PMSD) SPOKESMAN ELIEZER FRANCOIS, MINISTER OF HOUSING, HAS CRITICIZED THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) DECISION TO ALLOW USE OF CREOLE IN TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS AS "REVERSE SNOBBISM" AND A NEGATIVE, DESTRUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT THAT WILL HURT MAURITIUS CULTURALLY. HE SAYS MAURITIANS SHOULD STICK WITH THE TWO WORLD LANGUAGES THEY ALREADY ENJOY, FRENCH AND ENGLISH.

5. THE MMM CENTRAL COMMITTEE MET JULY 9 TO DEAL WITH A NUMBER OF INTERNAL PROBLEMS. ACCORDING TO LE MILITANT, SECRETARY GENERAL BERENGER GAVE A REPORT ON HIS RECENT FOREIGN TRAVELS, INCLUDING HIS MEETINGS WITH RENE OF THE SEYCHELLES, RATSIRAKA OF MADAGASCAR, LEADERS OF THE COMOROS, THE ANC OF SOUTH AFRICA, TANZANIA, MOZAMBIQUE, IRAQ, ALGERIA, CUBA, NORTH KOREA, RUMANIA, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, AND THE SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST PARTIES OF FRANCE. A DAY EARLIER HE HAD MADE A BRIEF VISIT TO REUNION TO SEE THE LEADERS OF THE SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST PARTIES OF THE NEIGHBORING ISLAND. THE PAPER SAID BERENGER IS STILL WORKING ON HIS IDEA OF A MEETING OF THE "PROGRESSIVE" PARTIES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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INDIAN OCEAN, PROBABLY TO BE HELD IN MADAGASCAR, THOUGH RENE OFFERED TO HOLD IT IN THE SEYCHELLES.

6. LE MILITANT REPORTED THAT THERE WAS A LONG DISCUSSION OF THE CURRENT "ECONOMIC CRISIS" BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE GOVERNMENT WAS BLAMED FOR MAKING IT WORSE INSTEAD OF BETTER. SOME INTERNAL PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE BEEN TROUBLING THE MMM WERE APPARENTLY RESOLVED, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM. SHIELA BAPPOO (WHO HAS BEEN FUEDING WITH DE L'ESTRAC, MAYOR OF BEAU BASSIN/ROSE HILL, TO THE EXTENT THAT SHE THREATENED TO RESIGN AS DEPUTY MAYOR) WILL REPLACE DE L'ESTRAC AS MAYOR FOR SOME WEEKS WHILE THE LATTER RECOVERS HIS HEALTH. DARGA'S CHARGES AGAINST HARRIS RAMPHUL WERE FOUND TO BE WITHOUT FOUNDATION, SO HE WAS ASKED TO WITHDRAW THEM; BUT AT THE SAME TIME RAMPHUL WAS TOLD TO GIVE PROOF OF HIS CONTINUING SUBMISSION TO MMM PARTY DISCIPLINE.

7. IN AN EDITORIAL IN LE MILITANT, BERENGER ARGUES THAT RAMGOOLAM'S GOVERNMENT IS "STYMIED", FACING A SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS WITH NO WAY TO SOLVE IT. TIME IS ON THE SIDE OF THE MMM, THE SECRETARY GENERAL SAYS, BUT THE PARTY HAS NO INTENTION OF FORCING GENERAL ELECTIONS BY TRYING TO MAKE THE CRISIS WORSE.

IT PLANS TO PLAY THE ROLE OF A "RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION." WHILE WAITING FOR THE NEXT ELECTIONS, IT WILL WORK ON PARTY ORGANIZATION AND MOBILIZATION. (COMMENT: BERENGER SEEMS TO THINK THE COUNTRY IS GOING TO POT AND HE WOULD RATHER PICK UP THE PIECES AFTER IT FALLS APART THAN WORK TO KEEP IT FROM COLLAPSING.)

8. AT A PRESS CONFERENCE THE HEAD OF THE EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION DENIED THAT THERE IS ANY ECONOMIC CRISIS, THOUGH HE WARNED THAT THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS TO BE FACED. HE BLAMED MAINLY EXTERNAL FACTORS FOR THE CURRENT PROBLEMS BUT ALSO SAID MAURITIANS HAVE BEEN LIVING BEYOND THEIR MEANS. HE CALLED FOR GREATER PRODUCTIVITY BY WORKERS AND CAUTIONED THAT MEETING DEMANDS FOR HIGHER AND HIGHER WAGES WILL SIMPLY RESULT IN MORE UNEMPLOYMENT AND OTHER ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES
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FOR THE ECONOMY AND THE PEOPLE.

9. FRANCO-MAURITIAN DISCUSSIONS IN PARIS ON TEXTILE IMPORTS APPARENTLY REACHED A SATISFACTORY CONCLUSION, WITH CONFIRMATION OF THE QUOTAS ESTABLISHED BY THE EARLIER ACCORD NEGOTIATED LAST FALL. A NEW QUOTA WAS ESTABLISHED FOR PRODUCTS NOT COVERED BY THE EARLIER AGREEMENT. THERE WILL BE NEW TALKS IN NOVEMBER TO SET QUOTAS FOR 1978-79.

10. A FRENCH FIRM IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING AN INVESTMENT OF ABOUT 5 MILLION RUPEES TO ESTABLISH A SILK PROCESSING PLANT. THIS WOULD BE A NEW INDUSTRY FOR MAURITIUS WHICH WOULD CREATE A GOOD DEAL OF SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT IN THE RAISING OF SILK WORMS.

11. LITRONIX, THE MAJOR AMERICAN PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN MAURITIUS' EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE, IS NO LONGER AMERICAN, AS THE FIRM HAS BEEN PURCHASED BY SIEMENS A.G. OF WEST GERMANY. THE PRECISION ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURER EMPLOYS OVER ONE THOUSAND MAURITIAN WORKERS.

12. IN A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE LE MILITANT CLAIMED THAT THE SOVIET-MAURITIAN FISHING ACCORD WAS AUTOMATICALLY RENEWED FOR THREE YEARS, SINCE NEITHER SIDE GAVE THE SIX MONTHS' NOTICE REQUIRED TO ABROGATE IT, AND THAT THIS WAS CONFIRMED TO THE PAPER BY THE MINISTER OF FISHERIES. ACCORDING TO THE PAPER, THE PRIVATE FISHING SECTOR IS TRYING TO PREVENT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT SOVIET-MAURITIAN FISHING ENTERPRISE. LE MILITANT FURTHERMORE CONFIRMED (FROM DIPLOMATIC SOURCES) THAT THE GOM IS GOING TO REQUIRE THE SOVIET EMBASSY TO REDUCE THE SIZE OF ITS STAFF AND THAT THE REDUCTION ORDER WILL BE "DRACONIAN."

13. ON JULY 8 INDEPENDENT L'EXPRESS RETURNED TO THE THEME
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OF COOLNESS IN SOVIET-MAURITIAN RELATIONS WITH A STORY THAT THE GOM HAS DECIDED TO PREVENT TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE SOVIET CARGO SHIPS FROM TRANSPORTING MAURITIAN SUGAR SOLD TO THE COMMON MARKET UNDER THE LOME CONVENTION. THIS DECISION RESULTED FROM THE "DISCOVERY" THAT IN 1976 THREE-FOURTHS OF THIS SUGAR WAS TRANSPORTED IN SOVIET VESSELS, AND MADE THE SOVIETS PROFITS OF AROUND 50 MILLION RUPEES. THER IS APPARENTLY ALSO A DISPUTE OVER AGENCS FEES BEING PAID BY THE SOVIET SHIPS TO THEIR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES.

14. MINISTER OF PLANNING GHURBURRUN IS TO LEAD A GOM DELEGATION TO CHINA AT THE END OF THIS WEEK TO DISCUSS THE LONG-DELAYED CHINESE AID PROJECT FOR BUILDING A NEW AIRPORT IN THE NORTH OF THE ISLAND, A PROJECT THAT HAS MADE HARDLY ANY PROGRESS IN FIVE YEARS. THE VISIT IS TO LAST THREE WEEKS. KEELEY

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